

At Florida A&M, an Anti-Hazing Administrator Works to Prevent More Harm to Students

By ANN SCHNOEBELEN

BRYAN F. SMITH's role as special assistant to the president for anti-hazing at Florida A&M University is the only one quite like it in higher education, he says.

His new position was created in response to the November 2011 hazing death of a Florida A&M student and drum major, **Robert Champion**. Twelve former band members have been charged with manslaughter in the case.

Mr. Smith, who has a law degree from John Marshall Law School and a master's in public management from Florida A&M, most recently worked as executive director of a nonprofit organization in Georgia that promotes educational success.

He plans to put new anti-hazing policies in place and enforce ones the university already has. "Students need to know what is required and what is expected on this campus," he says. "They need to know certain actions and behaviors will not be tolerated."

To that end, the university has created a new Web page, www.StopHazingatFAMU.com, to deal with hazing. The site offers videos and text that define hazing, lays out university policies and state law on the matter, and provides an online form for report-



Bryan F. Smith

FLORIDA A&M U.

ing problems and another form for making an anti-hazing pledge. Beginning with this spring semester, students are required to sign a pledge against participat-

"Students need to know what is required and what is expected on this campus."

ing in any kind of hazing as a prerequisite to register for classes.

Mr. Smith says he intends to be visible and approachable, attending student functions and student-government meetings and taking walks around the campus to give people a chance to talk to him about their concerns.

Institutions can use data and research to focus on groups and students most likely to be involved in hazing and educate them about the dangers of the practice, he says. Because hazing often occurs during recruitment and initiation of members of student organizations, those groups will be expected to work with the administration in anti-hazing efforts.

Mr. Smith says that he doesn't want student groups, which were banned from recruiting new members at Florida A&M for a short time after Mr. Champion's death, to see him as a foe. Having a large number of campus groups helps institutions attract involved students, he says.

"It comes down to proper oversight," over students, he says. "I don't want them to just take a pledge and that's the last time they hear my voice. I want to make sure allegations are thoroughly investigated ... and make sure there's a resolution." ■

4/19/13 A28 Vol LIX, # 32
Chronicle of Higher Ed